

DEVOTION IN THE PSALMS

May 29, 2022 | Seeking Refuge in the Anointed One

PREPARATION

GETTING READY

How do you see the nations raging against God and His Anointed today?

Read Psalm 2.

Ask God to use this lesson to help you behold the beauty of Christ.

THIS WEEK

KEY BIBLICAL TRUTH

God and His Anointed will judge with wrath those who refuse to submit to their rule.

THEOLOGY APPLIED

Seek refuge in the Son.

MEDITATE

“Serve the Lord with fear, and rejoice with trembling. Kiss the Son, lest he be angry, and you perish in the way, for his wrath is quickly kindled. Blessed are all who take refuge in him” (Psalm 2:11–12).

GETTING STARTED

+This section introduces the main ideas of Psalm 2.

Q: *Why do people rebel against authority?*

Q: *Do you think people rebel less as they mature?*

One cliché in high schools is the group of students known as “rebels.” If you attended a public high school, you are probably familiar with them. Every teenager has rebellious moments, but the rebels in high school take it to another level. They find their identity in defying authority. The odd thing is that what the rebels intend to accomplish by their rebellion is typically unclear. It is not as if they are going to overthrow the authority structure of the high school. No matter how much they rebel, the teachers and principals remain in charge. Perhaps they want to create a persona, but other students tend to find their disruptions more annoying than tough. The hardest thing to understand about the rebels is that they only hurt themselves. Their behavior frequently leads to detentions and suspensions. They are often the ones who drop out of school.

In Psalm 2, we encounter the rebels in the biblical story. These are not immature teenagers. Rather, they are identified broadly as the nations and the peoples and narrowly as the leaders of those nations. Furthermore, they are not rebelling against teachers and principals but against God and His Anointed king. They aim to be taken seriously. Nevertheless, as we will see in Psalm 2, their rebellion against God will come to nothing. They will not be able to overthrow God or His Anointed king. They will not escape God’s wrath. Their only hope is to seek refuge in His Son.

Q: *Why does Psalm 2 use generalized terms to refer to the rebels?*

Q: *Why is there often a reciprocal relationship between the leaders of a nation and the people of that nation in the Bible?*

APPLICATION POINT – Most of us were not part of the rebel crew in high school, but we have all rebelled against God and His Anointed king. Sin is an attempt to usurp God’s authority and overthrow Him as the rightful ruler. It is rebellion against God. And we are all sinners. Thus, Psalm 2 is written to all of us. The question for us is whether we will remain in rebellion (v. 9) or become part of the Anointed king’s inheritance (v. 8)? The answer depends on whether we believe in Jesus for the forgiveness of our sins and confess Him as Lord. Jesus is God’s Anointed king or Messiah (messiah means “anointed one” in Hebrew). Those who confess faith in Him are His inheritance. Everyone else is part of the rebellious plot against Him. They will be smashed like pottery on the day of God’s wrath.

■ UNDERSTANDING THE TEXT

+Psalm 2 divides neatly into four parts. This lesson will explain the main idea of each part and identify an application from them. It will conclude with two reflections on Psalms to conclude the series.

1. CONSPIRING AND REBELLION
2. GOD'S RESPONSE
3. THE ANOINTED'S RESPONSE
4. ADMONISHMENT TO THE KINGS
5. CONCLUDING THE PSALMS

GOING DEEPER

+This section will follow the five points listed above and draw life applications from Psalm 2.

1. CONSPIRING AND REBELLION

■ PSALM 2:1-3

Q: *Why did the psalmist ask “why” at the beginning of Psalm 2? Was he seeking information?*

Q: *Why did the nations want to rebel against God?*

Psalm 2 begins by describing the rebellion of the nations. Their rebellion against God and His Anointed king sets the stage for everything that follows. The opening “why” is not so much a request for information as an expression of stunned disbelief, mocking scorn, or both. As relayed at the conclusion of verse 1, their rebellion was beyond explanation. It is in vain, bound to fail before it gains even the slightest traction.

The psalmist begins by describing this rebellion on a nation-wide scale. The nations and the peoples raged and plotted against God and the Anointed. In verse two, however, he narrows his focus to the kings and rulers. It is challenging to know exactly what the psalmist had in mind by doing this. He could be moving from general to specific, greater to lesser, or perhaps even lesser to greater. Whatever the case, this rebellion is comprehensive and larger than any one individual because it includes entire nations and peoples. The people are active participants, not passive pawns directed by an aristocracy. It is larger than any one person because the events described transcend any type of rebellion on a personal level. Major world forces were at work attempting to outmaneuver God and His Anointed.

The only words they are allotted in the psalm provide the only detail of their rebellion. They wanted to cast off the bonds God and His Anointed have used to constrain them. Sin is an attempt to usurp God's rightful rule. They see God's rule as a constraint and desire to be rid of it. This image of tearing off God's bonds is an apt description of any and all sin.

Q: *Do you think of Christianity as more constraining or more liberating?*

Q: *How have you witnessed the raging of those who oppose God turn out to be in vain?*

APPLICATION POINT – Christianity is often regarded as a restrictive list of dos and don'ts. Those who renounce their faith in Christ often describe their experience in terms remarkably similar to Psalm 2. They find jettisoning their commitment to Christ to be liberating. This outlook completely disregards the gospel. Christianity is not primarily a list of dos and don'ts but belief in what Christ has done for us.

Belief in the gospel does, however, coincide with a change in heart. In theological terms, this is known as regeneration. When our hearts become alive to Christ, we are able to pursue our greatest joy in Him. The rebels in Psalm 2 and those who deny Christ today have completely misunderstood the situation. They think they will be free if they get rid of God. Instead, their hearts remain dead. How can something be free if it is dead? Those who reject Christ are far more bound to sin than they realize. Furthermore, a regenerated heart is able to enjoy God's creation within the parameters He has set. That is true freedom. Those who reject Christ in pursuit of freedom are chasing an illusion. True freedom is not the ability to follow our desires without constraint. True freedom is only found in Christ.

2. GOD'S RESPONSE

PSALM 2:4-6

Q: *Why does God laugh at those who plot against Him?*

Q: *Where has God's king [verse 6] been mentioned previously in this psalm?*

The second part of Psalm 2 shows God's response to those who plot against Him and His Anointed. God did not initially respond in anger but with laughter. The creature's attempt to overthrow the Creator is laughable. The consequences are not. Just as God spoke creation into being, one angry word from Him creates terror in those who dare plot against Him. God is not concerned that their plot might succeed. They would not ascend God's holy hill and dethrone Him. Instead, God would set up His Anointed king on Zion, His holy hill. God is in complete control of the earth and those who dwell in it.

Q: *Do you ever despair over world events?*

Q: *How have you seen God's control revealed in both current events and world history?*

APPLICATION POINT – The nations can rage and plot against God all they want, but it will all come to nothing. No power can threaten God's reign over His creation. God never worries about anything. This should be of great comfort to us. We are easily shaken by events happening around us and around the world. Things happen that we don't expect. God is not like that. He is never threatened by hostile forces. He is never caught off guard. If we seek refuge in Him, we can live with confidence knowing the world is in His hands.

3. THE ANOINTED'S RESPONSE

PSALM 2:7-9

Q: *Who is speaking in verse 7? Who is speaking in verse 8?*

Q: *How is this passage connected to 2 Samuel 7:12-16?*

The contrast between the Anointed king and the kings of the nations could not be starker. They schemed and plotted against God. The Anointed king was seated on His throne by God. The nations rebelled against Him. The Anointed king recounted His statutes. The nations wanted to take from God. The Anointed king will ask of God and receive.

The sonship of the Anointed king links Psalm 2 to another important messianic text. In 2 Samuel 7:12-16, God revealed His commitment to David and to those who would follow in his line as king. As the events of the Old Testament unfold, however, it becomes clear that God's promises center on a specific descendant of David. There are even some hints of this development in 2 Samuel 7. For instance, 2 Samuel 7:13 says this individual's throne will be established forever. In what sense could this apply to Solomon or any of David's other near descendants? The New Testament identifies Jesus as this specific descendant who would fulfill the promises God made to David in 2 Samuel 7. The Anointed king announced that God had declared Him to be His Son (Psalm 2:7), creating a link between Psalm 2 and 2 Samuel 7:14, which says, "I [God] will be to him a father, and he shall be to me a son." The Anointed king in Psalm 2 is the specific descendant of David anticipated in 2 Samuel 7.

God gave the nations to His Anointed king as an inheritance, the same nations that had been plotting against God and His Anointed. If they persisted in their plotting, they would suffer the wrath of God (Psalm 2:5) as mediated through the Anointed king (Psalm 2:9). If they gave up their plotting, they would take part in the Anointed's kingdom.

Q: *How does the promise for Jesus to inherit the nations appear in the New Testament, and what is the church's role in this promise?*

Q: *What does it matter if the Anointed king is begotten of God?*

APPLICATION POINT – The redemption of the nations is closely tied to the promises of God in the Old Testament. In Genesis 12:3, God promised that all the families of the earth would be blessed through Abraham.

The Anointed king in Psalm 2 would receive the nations as an inheritance. These promises were eventually fulfilled in Jesus. The gospel provides hope for all the peoples of the earth. Jesus has given the church the task of sharing the gospel with the nations (Matthew 28:18–20). He uses us as the means by which He will secure His inheritance. Our calling as followers of the Anointed king is simple—to find refuge in Him and live on mission in the world.

4. ADMONISHMENT TO THE KINGS

■ PSALM 2:10–12

Q: *How could you rejoice with trembling?*

Q: *What does the kiss signal in verse 12?*

If the nations persisted in rebelling against God and His Anointed, they would suffer God’s wrath and be bashed with a rod of iron. But the nations had an opportunity to repent. The leaders were called to “be wise” and “be warned.” The same two Hebrew terms appear in Joshua 1:7. There they are translated as “turn” and “success.” The context of this passage is meditation on God’s law. Thus, it is possible that the two Hebrew verbs in Psalm 2:10 mean that the leaders had to learn and obey God’s law if they wished to avoid His wrath.

The command to kiss the Son means to submit to the His authority. Those who do so will be spared from the way of destruction and able to seek refuge in the Him. There is still time for those who wish to repent to serve God while trembling from how close they came to suffering His wrath.

Q: *What does God’s willingness to show grace to the kings who plotted against Him mean for you?*

Q: *How does submission to the Anointed king appear today?*

APPLICATION POINT: The application for this section could not be clearer. Submit to Jesus’s lordship! Unlike the nations in Psalm 2:1, rebellion does not always take the form of open defiance. Sometimes our rebellion can take far more subtle forms, such as neglect. Even Christians can inadvertently fall into times of deep rebellion if we neglect God’s Word and neglect speaking with Him in prayer.

5. CONCLUDING THE PSALMS

Q: *What similarities are there between Psalm 1 and 2?*

Q: *What is the significance of these similarities?*

We have not often considered the significance of how the psalms are arranged, but Psalms 1 and 2 contain a number of similarities that indicate that their placement may have been intentional. For starters, neither psalm contains a superscription. In Book 1 of the Psalter, only Psalms 10 and 33 also lack superscriptions. Psalm 1 begins by telling us how to be blessed (v. 1), and Psalm 2 ends by telling us how to be blessed (v. 12). In Psalm 1 we are told the blessed man avoids the way of sinners (v. 1). In Psalm 2, we are admonished to submit to the Son unless we perish in the way (v. 12). These references to “blessed” and “way” create an envelope effect around these two psalms. Furthermore, in Psalm 1, we are told to avoid the counsel of the wicked (v. 1). In Psalm 2, we see the peoples plotting evil together (v. 1). In Psalm 1, we are told the blessed man meditates on the law (v. 2). In Psalm 2, we see the peoples plotting (same Hebrew word translated “meditates” in Psalm 1:2) in vain. Psalm 1:6 says the way of the wicked will perish. Psalm 2:12 warns us against perishing in our way.

Q: *Why would these two psalms be linked so extensively?*

Q: *Why would they be placed at the beginning of the Psalter?*

APPLICATION POINT – Many scholars believe whoever organized the book of Psalms intended Psalms 1 and 2 to function as an introduction to the book. Almost every major theme can be located in Psalms 1–2. They clearly reveal the contrast between the ways of the wicked and the righteous. Psalm 1 highlights the importance of wisdom and God’s law. Psalm 2 introduces us to the nations, which are frequently the battleground in the Psalms.

You never can be certain if the nations will oppose God or be the means by which He demonstrates His glory. The appearance of the Messiah in Psalm 2 anticipates subsequent messianic psalms (Psalm 110). The imprecatory (judgment) psalms are also anticipated by the wrath of God and the bashing of those who plot against Him. One of the only major themes in the Psalms that does not clearly appear in Psalms 1 and 2 is confession, and you could argue it is implied if the nations would repent of their rebellion and submit to the Son (Psalm 2:10–12). If you want to understand the Psalms, start by looking deeply at Psalms 1 and 2 and allow them to guide you.

Q: *How do personal devotions help you take refuge in Christ?*

Q: *How have you witnessed personal devotion in the Psalms?*

This series has frequently mentioned Oakwood’s emphasis on personal devotions. The goal of personal devotions is to give yourself a constant reminder of the demand of the concluding line of Psalm 2. Personal devotions encourage you to take refuge in Christ. When you read the Bible devotionally, you are recognizing your need to take refuge in God through His Word. When you pray, you are recognizing God as the only true refuge you have. If you want to “take refuge in him,” you need to prioritize your personal devotional times. Personal devotions are not the only key to finding the blessedness described in the Psalter, but they are an irreplaceable spiritual discipline.

Q: *Have you ever been frustrated by not understanding something you read during a personal devotional time?*

Q: *Does fear of not understanding Scripture ever keep you from reading or studying the Bible?*

APPLICATION POINT – Psalm 2 concludes with a call to take refuge in the Anointed king. You do not always have to understand the Bible perfectly when you read it during a personal devotional time. Of course, you want to read with as much understanding as possible, but you are never going to fully understand every detail of God’s Word. You might not even understand most of it. That is okay. Part of what you are doing during your daily devotional is taking refuge in Jesus. The act of submitting daily to God’s Word can be as profitable as reading it with great understanding. Never let fear of not understanding God’s Word keep you from reading it.

NEXT STEPS

There are 150 Psalms. This series only looked at twenty-three of them, but you have probably begun to see how the Psalms can form your view of God and shape your relationship with Him. Write down three ways in which your understanding of God or His Word has been transformed during this series.

PRAY

+Use these prayer points to instill the lessons you learned from God's Word this week.

-Father, forgive me for plotting against you. You are my God in heaven. You know all things. My rebellion against you is hopeless.

-Anointed king, I long for the day you return to receive Your inheritance. May it increase a thousandfold!

-Father, I thank you for your written Word. I can never understand it completely but encourage me to daily seek to engage you through it.

-God, I take refuge in you. You are my only hope of a blessed life.